

ONLINE DONATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

(0001) The present application claims benefit of provisional patent application Serial No. 60/178,932, filed February 1, 2000, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

(0002) The present invention relates to a charitable organization's solicitation for a monetary donation. In particular, the invention relates to a charitable organization's solicitation for a monetary donation via the Internet. More particularly the invention relates to a system that enables an individual donor to contribute to selected projects of the charitable organization via the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

(0003) Special interests of individuals may be current events, health concerns, safety concerns, religious concerns, or any other variety of concerns. Information about special

interests and concerns may be found in the public libraries, reference volumes, or from charitable organizations who maintain public information for distribution to individuals.

Charitable organizations are defined as non-profit or not for profit type organizations.

(0004) One medium for providing information to individuals is through the World Wide Web or Internet. The Internet is a tool that enables charitable organizations to maintain or provide websites on the Internet and present programs, projects, and causes that exemplify their particular endeavors. Interested individuals may, if desired, view the charitable organization's endeavors via the Internet.

(0005) Soliciting monetary donations from individuals by charitable organizations in support of the charitable endeavors is a costly and time-consuming effort. Attempts in the past to solicit monetary donations from individuals focused on telephone solicitation, direct mail, radio, and television. These attempts have produced limited results due to the high cost of producing events that appeal to prospective individual donors. A donor is defined as an individual person or organization wishing to make a monetary contribution to a charitable organization.

(0006) It would be desirable to have information about a particular charitable organization's projects that focused on the donor's concerns. Incorporated into the charitable organization's projects would be an appeal for a donation to support that particular project. It would be further desirable to receive the information and appeal via the Internet.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- (0007) The present invention is a system of soliciting donations via the World Wide Web or Internet. The present invention is installed on a computer or server with Internet access. The charitable organization integrates with this invention through hyperlinks into the organization's specific database section site within the invention's database. The charitable organization has cataloged with the present invention selected items or assets to be presented to a donor as gifts based on the area of interest and contribution level of the donor. The catalog listing of these items or assets resides on the present invention's database. The charitable organization's website may, if desired, display a banner hyperlink to the present invention's website. The donor, in communication with the charitable organization, selects a donation option by activating a link to the present invention's website i.e., clicking on a selectively displayed hyperlink icon. Transparent to the donor, the present invention is now in communication with the donor via the charitable organization's website. The present invention facilitates the donation process, the selection of gifts in response to selected contributions, and the delivery of the selected gifts.

- (0008) A donor's computer monitor will display a Donation Selector "screen-shot". The Donation Selector functioning in concert with a Donor Experience Object, a Give Object, Add Item Object, Empty Selector Object, Clear Item Object, Delivery Selector Object, Payment Object, and Confirmation Object to command and control the presentation, delivery, and confirmation of selected monetary donations or items and

assets that may be selected by the donor for a monetary contribution to the charitable organization.

(0009) An organization's management computer monitor may, if desired, display an Editing Tool "screen-shot" via selected access to the present invention's website. The 5 Editing Tool in concert with an Item Creation Object commands and controls additions, deletions, reports, and updates of selected monetary donations, programs or items that may be requested by the donor in return for a monetary contribution to the charitable organization.

(0010) When taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and the 10 appended Claims, other features and advantages of the present invention become apparent upon reading the following detailed description of the embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(0011) The invention is illustrated in the drawings in which like reference characters 15 designate the same or similar parts throughout the figures of which:

Fig. 1 illustrates a top-level block diagram view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention,

- Fig. 2 illustrates a computer monitor display of an item request or selection or donation of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 3a illustrates a computer monitor display of a Donation Selector of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 3b illustrates a continuation of the Donation Selector of Fig. 3a,
- Fig. 4 illustrates a computer monitor display of Confirmation of a donor's selection of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 5 illustrates a computer monitor display of an Editing Tool of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 6 illustrates a computer monitor display of a General Donation Opportunity of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 7 illustrates a computer monitor display of a Delivery Selector of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 8 illustrates a computer monitor display of a Donor Transaction of Fig. 1,
- Fig. 9 illustrates an Item Creation Object,
- Fig. 10 illustrates a flowchart of a Donor Experience Object,
- Fig. 11 illustrates a flowchart of a View Item Object,
- Fig. 12 illustrates a flowchart of a Give Item Object,
- Fig. 13 illustrates a flowchart of an Add Item Object,
- Fig. 14 illustrates a flowchart of an Empty Selector Object,

- Fig. 15 illustrates a flowchart of a Clear Item Object,
Fig. 16 illustrates a flowchart of a Delivery Selector Object,
Fig. 17 illustrates a flowchart of a Payment Object,
Fig. 18 illustrates a flowchart of a Confirmation Object.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

(0012) Before describing in detail the particular improved system for facilitating a donation to a charitable organization in accordance with the present invention, it should be observed that the invention resides primarily in the novel data structures of the system software and not in the combination of conventional system apparatus. Examples of a system apparatus are a computer, telephone network, PBX system, or a communication system linking the system apparatus by a local area network, wide area network, or Internet network. The present invention utilizes discrete subsystems or subassembly components, and associated control of the aforementioned system apparatus and components. The invention is not in the particular detailed configuration of the system apparatus but in the command and control thereof. Accordingly, the data structures, command, control, and arrangement of the present invention have, for the most part, been illustrated in the drawings by readily understandable block diagrams and flowcharts. The drawings show only those specific details that are pertinent to the present invention in order not to obscure the disclosure with structural details which will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art having the benefit of the description herein. For example, the present invention 10, Fig. 1 is a top-level block diagram of the operational features

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involving a donor 12 in communication with a charitable organization's 11 Internet website. The charitable organization's 11 Internet website, transparent to the donor may, if desired, be hyperlinked to the present invention 10. The present invention 10 exists as an overlying layer of software object programs that are installed over or in concert with selected system apparatus operating software programs or in concert with selected subprograms. The present invention 10, once installed on the server, facilitates transference of selected donations from the donor to the charitable organization 11. Only data objects of the present invention 10 are illustrated in order to simplify and emphasize those portions of the present invention 10 that are most pertinent. The software programs to implement the present invention 10 may be realized in any convenient software program language such as C++ or Smalltalk. Thus, the present invention 10 illustrated in the Figures does not necessarily represent the data structural arrangement of the exemplary system, and is primarily intended to illustrate major object data structures of the system in a convenient functional grouping whereby the present invention may be more readily understood.

(0013) An overview of the present invention 10, Fig. 1 is a system for soliciting donations via the World Wide Web or Internet. The donor 12 may, if desired, be an individual or an individual representing an organization with a particular interest in a charitable organization. An example of a charitable organization is the Trees Atlanta, the Atlanta Humane Society, the North Shore Animal League or any other non-profit organization that has a presence or website on the Internet. The present invention 10 is installed on a computer or server with Internet access and linked to the charitable organization's 11 website. The charitable organization 11 has cataloged selected items or

assets as gifts to the donor 12 by design and with the organization's sole discretion. The catalog listing of these items resides in the present invention's database 14. The charitable organization's 11 website may, if desired, display a banner hyperlink to link to the present invention's 10 website. The donor 12, in communication with the charitable organization 11, selects a donation by activating a link to the present invention's 10 website i.e., clicking on a selectively displayed hyperlink. Transparent to the donor 12, the present invention 10 is now in communication with the donor 12 and the charitable organization's 11 website. The present invention 10 facilitates the donation process, the selection of gifts in response to selected contributions, data input required for payment of the donation, customization of and delivery of the selected gifts.

(0014) A more detailed description of the present invention 10, Fig. 1: The donor 12 may, if desired, have a particular interest in the subject matter presented by a particular charitable organization 11. The charitable organization 11 may, if desired, have a plurality of projects available that are in need of a monetary contribution. The donor 12 in communication with the charitable organization 11 may, if desired, review a selected project of the charitable organization 11. The present invention's 10 hyperlink may, if desired, be selectively positioned within selected projects of the charitable organization 11. The donor 12 is motivated to make a contribution in support of the selected project he is reviewing by clicking the present invention's 10 hyperlink.

(0015) The computer monitor display 16, Fig. 3a and 3b viewed by the donor 12 indicates a selected catalog containing previously stored donation items for selection. A selection of catalog item or items helps fund the donor's 12 selected project. If desired,

the donor 12 may select to give an arbitrary restricted or unrestricted donation. The system will allow the entire donation to be acknowledged as fully tax deductible; or if desired, the donor 12 may select a donation program offered by the selected charitable organization 11. The unit amount 18 of the item selected instantly appears on the computer monitor display 16 along with the income tax deductible amount 19 and the total amount 20 of the donation. After the donor 12 has made a selection, an updated Donation Selector computer monitor display 16 is presented to the donor 12. The updated Donation Selector computer monitor display 16 , Fig. 3a & 3b summarizes all items or assets purchased by the donor 12 and supplies the total donation C and the tax-deductible portion D of the donation. The donor 12 may, if desired, select a delivery address for the item or asset selected. The donor 12 indicates the delivery address by using the Delivery Selector 26 pull-down "Deliver as Billed to" menu 27, Figure 7. If the donor 12 has selected a general donation to the charitable organization 11, a computer monitor display of a general donation opportunity 28, Figure 6 is presented to the donor 12. The donor 12 may, if desired, enter a selected amount of donation 29 and click the add icon 31 to give the amount that donor 12 inputted. The Donation Selector, display 16, will reflect the donation selection summary. When the donor 12 is finished , if desired, donor 12 may elect to continue and this will activate a computer monitor display of a Donor Transaction 32, Fig. 8. The Donor Transaction 32, Fig. 8 collects information concerning the donor's 12 method of payment for the general donation or item(s) selected. If desired, the donor 12 may click on the organization's logo to return to the charitable organization's 11 website without completing the donation.

(0016) The charitable organization 11 may, if desired, utilize an Editing Tool 24, Fig. 5 to make additions or modification to the catalog of donation items or assets. For example, the charitable organization 11 sponsors reading projects for school children and desires to solicit donations for the reading project from adults. The charitable 5 organization 11 accomplishes this goal by adding a new and popular book 15, Fig. 2 to its catalog for selection on the present invention's 10 website. The Editing Tool 24, Fig. 5 enables the charitable organization 11 to insert the book 15, the unit price 25 of the book 15, and the expected tax deductible value 26 of the donation.

(0017) An Item Creation Object 33, Fig. 9 facilitates the creation of the charitable 10 organization's 11 Editing Tool 24, Fig. 5. The Item Creation Object 33 receives a request 34 to add an item to the charitable organization's 11 catalog. The Item Creation Object 33 presents the Editing Tool 24 to a member or selected user associated with the charitable organization 11. The selection process of members or users is determined by a predetermined access code. The Item Creation Object 33 commands and controls the 15 entry of data into the Editing Tool 24 to include entering the description of the items 35, tax deductible amount 36, adding another item 37, and storing 38 the entered information in the database 14, Fig. 1.

(0018) The Donor Experience Object 39, Fig. 10 commands and controls the entry of 20 data into the Donation Selector 16, Fig. 3a. The Donor Experience Object 39 displays 40, Fig. 10 all items or asset descriptions, unit amounts, tax-deductible amounts, and totals. The Donor Experience Object 39 guides the donor through a plurality of choices to make donations, select and receive gifts, and receive a tax deduction. The Donor Experience

Object 39 is in communication with the View Item Object 41, Give Item Object 42, Add Item Object 43, Empty Selector Item Object 44, Clear Item Object 45, and Delivery Selector Object 46. The Donor Experience Object 39, in concert with other objects, facilitates the donations, gifts, and tax deductions for the charitable organization 11 via 5 the present invention's 10 website 13.

(0019) The View Item Object 41, Fig. 11 receives a request from the Donor Experience Object 39 to display the title 47 of a selected item or asset of interest by the donor. In concert with displaying the title 47, the View Item Object 41 displays the amount of the purchase 48, the description of the Item 49, and the image of the item 50 of 10 the selected title 47 via the Donation Selector 16, Fig. 3a. The View Item Object 41 enables the donor to add selected items 51 and/or return 52 to the charitable organization's 11 website.

(0020) The Give Item Object 42, Fig. 12 receives a request from the Donor Experience Object 39 via the Donation Selector 16, Fig. 3a for a "general"* arbitrary donation by the donor. The Give Item Object 42 in concert with the "general"* arbitrary donation opportunity computer monitor display 28, Fig. 6 displays the item 54, the item description 55, and the minimum donation 53. The donor may, if desired, enter the amount of the donation 56 and add to donation, 57, which is displayed as the updated 15 Donation Selector 16. * Note in the description in this paragraph and in figure 6 the "general" is a label name only. The donation could have easily been entitled restricted, 20 other specific fund, or program.

F D O T T E R = P O S T C O M P

- (0021) If the donor requests additional items or assets for purchase, the Add Item or Asset Object 43, Fig. 13 in communication with the Donor Experience Object 39 increments the count of items or assets 58 via the Donation Selector 16, Fig. 3a. If the donor requests no additional items he may, if desired, request to empty or cancel all 5 previous items or asset selections. The Donation Selector 16 in concert with the Empty Selector Item Object 44 commands the count of selected items or assets to zero 59. If the donor requests no additional items or assets he may, if desired, request to empty or cancel a selected item. The Donation Selector 16 in concert with the Clear Item Object 45 cancels a selected item 60.
- 10 (0022) After the donor has selected all purchases, the Delivery Selector Object 46, Fig. 16 in concert with the Delivery Selector 26, Fig. 7 orchestrates the delivery of the selected purchases to the donor. The Delivery Selector Object 46 commands the computer monitor display of the Delivery Selector 26 to display each deliverable item 61. The donor is prompted to edit the deliver information display on the drop down menu 27, 15 Fig. 7 via the Delivery Selector Object's 46 command edit delivery address 62, Fig. 16. The donor clicks the continue icon 63 on the Delivery Selector 26 whereby the Payment Object 64, Fig. 17 is activated.
- (0023) The Payment Object 64, Fig. 17 in concert with the computer monitor display of the Donor Transaction 32, Fig. 8 facilitates the payment and delivery of the selected 20 purchases by the donor. The Payment Object 64 commands the computer monitor display of the Donor Transaction 32 to display each donation amount including the tax deductible amount 65, the total donation amount 66, and delivery information 67. The donor enters

credit card information 68 and billing information 70, Fig. 8 into the designated or provided blocks via the Payment Object's 64 manual input command 69. Upon completion of all the required entries and review of the donation selections made by the donor, the donor may, if desired, click the submit icon 71. Clicking the submit icon 71 5 activates the Confirmation Object 72, Figure 18.

(0024) The Confirmation Object 72, Fig. 18 in communication with the computer monitor display of the Confirmation of the donor's selection 21, Fig. 4 facilitates the processing of the credit card information 73, Fig. 18, the display of each donation item, including unit amount, total amount, deductible amount, and delivery destination 74. The 10 Confirmation Object 72 further commands the sending of an email 75 with a summary of all transactions with the present invention 10. The Confirmation Object 72 terminates 76 the interaction between the donor and the present invention 10. The donor's communication link is returned to the charitable organization's 11 website.

(0025) The present invention 10 records all transactions and interactions with the 15 donors who access the present invention's 10 website 13. Reports may, if desired, be generated detailing the donor's name, address, age and other demographic information. The charitable organization 11 may, if desired, gain restricted access to the present invention's 10 website 13 and review the all transactions to the organization by donors. If desired, the charitable organization 11 may request a separate report detailing selected 20 information recorded during the transaction between the present invention 10 and selected donors. The charitable organization 11 may, if desired, receive the report by

email or in a database format for importing into a contact manager software application for further follow-up and contact.

(0026) Although only a few exemplary embodiments of this invention have been described in detail above, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many 5 modifications are possible in the exemplary embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as defined in the following claims. Means-plus-function clause is intended to cover the structures described herein as performing the recited function and not only structural equivalents 10 but also equivalent structures. Thus, although a nail and a screw may not be structural equivalents in that a nail employs a cylindrical surface to secure wooden parts together, whereas a screw employs a helical surface, in the environment of fastening wooden parts, a nail and a screw may be equivalent structures.

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